

# Divorce The Vanderbilt Curse

## Divorces in the Vanderbilt Family.

W. K. Vanderbilt divorced and married again. Consuelo Vanderbilt separated from the duke of Marlborough.

Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt divorced and married to O. H. P. Belmont.

Mrs. Frederick Vanderbilt divorced from her first husband.

Alfred Vanderbilt divorced.

Willie K. Vanderbilt Jr. talking of divorce.

Elliot Shepard, great-grandson of Commodore Vanderbilt, once separated from his wife.

Col. Vanderbilt Allan, the son-in-law of William Henry Vanderbilt, who was divorced from the wife he married after the death of his first wife, the daughter of W. H. Vanderbilt.

Mrs. Clarence Collins, granddaughter of Commodore Vanderbilt, divorced.

Countess Czalkowsky, great-granddaughter of Commodore Vanderbilt, divorced.

Leroy Dresser, the brother of Mrs. George Vanderbilt, sued for divorce.

## Children Affected by the Vanderbilt Divorces.

Willie H. Vanderbilt, son of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt.

Muriel and Willie K. Vanderbilt III, children of Willie K. Vanderbilt Jr.

Marquis of Blandford and Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill, children of the duchess of Marlborough.

Two children by her first husband of countess Czalkowsky, who is the great-granddaughter of Commodore Vanderbilt. Also her third son since her marriage to Henry S. Redmond.

Mrs. Redmond herself was a child of a divorced Vanderbilt descendant, Mrs. Clarence Collins, who was a granddaughter of Commodore Vanderbilt.

Mrs. Jack Wilmerding, the daughter of Col. Allan and of his first wife, the oldest daughter of William Henry Vanderbilt, was to a certain extent the victim of the divorce habit, as she lived with her father and the wife from whom he was divorced after the death of her mother.

Consuelo, duchess of Marlborough, was only recently married when her father and mother were divorced.

Willie K. Vanderbilt Jr., who is now separated from his wife, had this example before his own marriage.

Harold Vanderbilt, the third son of Willie K. Sr., has lived part of the time with his mother and part with his father since their divorce.

**T**O THE workaday world, which wonderingly reads of the increasing number of divorces of the Vanderbilts, the most puzzling and at the same time the most tragic aspect of their matrimonial record is its effect upon the little Vanderbilts. To be under the shadow of the divorce court is the fate of more than half the children that have already been born of the Vanderbilt unions. In fact, they are all exposed to this malady and its results more or less directly, as other children are exposed to the measles and the whooping cough. Whether it "takes" or not in their own immediate families, there are those who believe that there are none of the Vanderbilt families but who have this fate impending—that even if it never drops divorce is always a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of the most devoted of them.

At present there are five Vanderbilt children of the younger generation whose fathers and mothers have enjoyed immunity from the divorce courts and who have only come in contact with it second hand.

There are also just five who through no fault of their own are "short on fathers," and who, getting along with one parent, are left to puzzle their baby heads as best they can over what has become of the other. Whether this shortage will increase into a multiplicity of fathers and mothers by each parent marrying again is the question which is now occupying those who are close enough to see the motions of that part of the Vanderbilt family which are separated.

## Children Involved in Muddle.

Of the children already involved in the divorce or separation muddles there are:

Willie H. Vanderbilt, son of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, aged 8.

Muriel and William K., children of Willie K. Vanderbilt Jr.

Marquis of Blandford and Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill, children of the duchess of Marlborough.

Among those not yet affected are:

Cathleen, daughter of Reginald Vanderbilt.

Cornelius and Grace, children of Cornelius III, as he is usually called, but really Cornelius senior, as he is now the oldest member of the family.

The two children of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, who was Gertrude Vanderbilt, bring this number up to five.

How far this will go and where it will stop; to what extent it will break up the possibility of the perpetuating of a great family and a great fortune by always keeping one of the sons as "the head" is the question which agitates those who are most interested in the Vanderbilts.

## Parents Set the First Example.

That the newest and latest separation of Willie K. Jr. from his wife, who was Miss Virginia Fair, and that of the duchess of Marlborough from the duke is only natural with the example set by their own father and mother is conceded. It was only a short time after her own marriage that the duchess of Marlborough had the opportunity to exercise all her diplomacy from the embarrassing habit which her own father and mother formed of marrying again, and it was noticed that she was quite equal to the occasion.

Her father, Willie K. Sr., was married to Mrs. Ruth-erford in London, and the duchess was present. After

the ceremony she kissed her father and wished him happiness, and she has always been on friendly terms with his new wife. She has also been on the most affectionate terms with her own mother, who married O. H. P. Belmont immediately after the divorce.

It was not so long after this that everybody was shocked with the news that the duke and duchess could no longer live together—or would no longer.

## Terms Favorable to the Duke.

Under the arrangements of the separation settlement the children were to be with their father a small part of the time, and most of the time with their mother. But under the English plan the duchess could not live at Blenheim, the home of the Marlboroughs, but had to content herself with the beautiful town house presented to her by her father. That the duke looks crusty and unamiable is the opinion of many Americans who have seen him, and tourists who have visited Blenheim have resented the sight of this small lordling (small in stature at least) riding horseback over his estate, which had been enriched by his wife's money while his gates were closed to his wife.

Now it is thought that a reconciliation may be accomplished by the duchess' father, and, apropos of this, the latter has made a remark which is considered funny when his own matrimonial experiences are remembered.

"This nonsense of a separation has gone far enough," he said. To try to force the pair to live together again, he is reported to be cutting off part of the allowances that he makes to both the duke and the duchess. He has allowed the duke \$50,000 a year since the separation, and the duke soon declared that he could hardly keep up Blenheim on it so that it wouldn't go actually to pieces.

## Duchess Lends a Helping Hand.

To help him out the duchess relieved him of the support of the two children, paying for it out of her allowance. In the meantime it seems to those who look at the beautiful portraits of these children that they both look out on the mix-up which separates their father and mother with wondering eyes.

Whatever happens, the little duke of Blandford cannot be cheated out of his patrimony, as far as the estate is concerned, although the fortune that it will take to "restore" it again when he comes of age will have to depend upon the good will of his grandfather, Vanderbilt. How many more separate sets of grandchildren this gentleman will have to settle his money upon will be seen later. If his son Willie K. gets a divorce and remarries. In case this son should acquire another family there comes the question, will Willie K. Sr. be most interested in his namesake, Willie K. III, who remains with his mother, or will he naturally turn to later children that might be born to his son Willie K. II.

Whether Mrs. Willie K. II. will remarry is wondered about. It was her sister, Mrs. Arthur Kemp, who divorced her husband and declared that it was the millions belonging to the rich married couples that begets all the unhappiness.

## Fate Hangs in the Balance.

In the meantime even more uncertainty awaits the fate of little William Henry, aged who is the only child of the Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilts. This was the child who was elected to receive the bulk of the other half of the great Vanderbilt fortune. It will be remembered that old William Henry divided the greater part of his fortune between his sons Cornelius and William K. equally. His other sons, Frederick and George, and his four daughters, Mrs. Elliot F. Shepard, Mrs. W. Seward Webb, Mrs. H. McKay Twombly, and Mrs. W. D. Sloane, shared equally in the remainder of the fortune.

It was the hope of the father of this large family that of the two sons whom he made the chief heirs one would build up a line of succession which would remain stable and receive the bulk of the fortune. Cornelius announced his purpose of doing this, and his eldest son, Cornelius, generally known as Cornelius III, was picked as his heir. When this young man announced his intention of marrying Miss Grace Wilson, the beautiful daughter of a fine New York family, but seven or eight years his senior, there was a furious quarrel. "She is too old for you, and if you marry her I will disinherit you," said the father.

## Son Gives Decisive Answer.

For answer the son immediately married her and lost \$50,000,000, which his father willed to Alfred Gwynne afterward. It was the largest fortune ever given up for love, and, strange to say, the man who lost it has seemed to be the most happy of all the Vanderbilts in his matrimonial relations.

Mrs. Cornelius is said to be one of the few women in her set of New York society who has brains, and she is a perfect society leader. She is a devoted mother to her beautiful children, and under her influence Cornelius has worked hard in the railroad business. He has invented several appliances which are in use on his own and other railroads. He is a scholarly and unusual man, and there are some who think that he may have the best gifts to pass on in succession of any of the Vanderbilts.

But the money, so the father willed, should be conserved and passed on by Alfred Gwynne, who married Elsie French. Alfred was not scholarly, however. He was not even possessed of the microbe of family devotion. His defections, both from the path of business and matrimonial allegiance, have been notorious—and costly. They have cost him his wife and a tremendous alimony, and the separation from his 8-year-old son, William Henry, the child to whom the bulk of the fortune was to have been passed on.

## More "Alliances" Now in Sight.

But now Alfred shows signs of marrying again, if his uncertain "light of love" should hit upon some one who is eligible to matrimony. She is a devoted mother to her beautiful children, and under her influence Cornelius has worked hard in the railroad business. He has invented several appliances which are in use on his own and other railroads. He is a scholarly and unusual man, and there are some who think that he may have the best gifts to pass on in succession of any of the Vanderbilts.

Should both of these people, now treacherably divorced, marry and have children, where will Alfred decide that the bulk of his fortune shall go? Just as likely will the child that may be born of any new union of his as with the child who shall be a member

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